

## Content

- Why people purchase fakes
- Scrap book notes (hints and tips that do not warrant a web page or an article on their own)

## Why people purchase fakes

### **An old look is one of the main reasons why people fall for fake antiques**

Many say that they bought something because they “liked” it, but usually they were hoping at the same time that the item was antique. In most cases Chinese porcelain is bought this way the inexperienced buyer ends up with a fake antique; often such fakes are very simple or carelessly made and of low quality.

Why do they get fakes?

People who buy 'antiques' with that attitude can basically not get antiques in a world stuffed with fake antiques; they just do not care enough for antiques, or do not wish to learn about the most essential things related to Chinese antiques... they buy all sorts of Asian items, even such with Japanese decorations, thinking they may be valuable Chinese antiques. This sometimes includes items showing people in classical Japanese attire or hairdo in the decoration. Knowing the difference is a basic requirement for collecting either of these. What a waste...

### **Do you see yourself in this?**

*Actually, we were all this way when we started collecting, especially those of us who needed to learn without guidance.*

**But learn!** If you are currently buying objects this way, you should understand that you are not likely (or rather very unlikely) getting authentic Chinese antiques of any sort. While this may work with other antiques, it does not necessarily do so with those from China. Do to the huge faking industry in China, we always need to be prepared to eliminate fakes.

For example, if there originally were some genuine, good Chinese antiques in a shop or thrift store you are visiting, they are likely long gone, especially if it is a place like a thrift store. There are collectors and dealers who make regular rounds of such shops to find good items.

However, many of the people who look for Chinese antiques in such places do not have the requisite knowledge to recognize a genuine Chinese antique. If you spend the time and effort to learn about authenticity and age, you have the edge when it comes to pick the genuine antiques or quality items first. If not, what you get are the leftovers that the others did not bother to buy.

Always be aware that something looking old is not necessarily so. This is especially true when it comes to Chinese wares. Today, chances that a seemingly antique item is in reality a Chinese fake, or a recently made copy, are much too high.

Some new collectors use what might be called *shotgun tactics*. They think they will find some real antiques earlier or later, if they keep at it, buying lots of supposed antiques. There must be a few real ones in the end - but will there...?

Some collectors have been in this for years. I have heard stories of collectors who have been collecting for a decade or two, have a house full of the stuff, but none are genuine antiques. I have personally been at the home of a Chinese collector in Taiwan, who had a living room stuffed with porcelain. He was convinced they were genuine, but only one or two of the more common objects appeared authentic. The collector had no basic knowledge for identifying authentic or fake antiques, but thought that all items were genuine. If he had cared to research his items, he would know better.

A 'classic' mistake novices make is that on grounds of superficial similarity to a known genuine item, they are too easily convinced that an item they have (or consider purchasing), is authentic or valuable. They hope they have a valuable Ming item, but in fact it were, not every Ming item is valuable. Comparing pictures is a necessary part of research, especially if they find pictures of a similar item located in a museum. However, auction catalogs of top tier auction houses may perhaps not contain fakes, but the top class items they display are not things that a novice can 'encounter' on the market, in a thrift store, or flea market.

----High profile items in the open market are *always* fakes, when you do not know your stuff.----

With only some 1% of Chinese antiques on the market (both high and low end) being authentic, it is almost impossible to find authentic items this way. The best is always to first find a knowledgeable and trustable seller or dealer.

If an item is costly, but the dealer does not seem that knowledgeable, try to get an assurance that an item can be returned, if it turns out as fake, or not antique. Then, after purchasing, have a valuation or appraisal done to verify it.

## **Notes from my scrap book**

*Tips and hints from my scrap book, accumulated over the years in an unrelated order. These tips may not be worthwhile a web page, but many contain information that is not mentioned in any books, or literature. Some of these bits of information are relevant for more advanced collectors.*

### **Differences in Collecting Attitudes – China and the West**

What may be important or attractive to a western collector is not necessarily valued the same way in China. Chinese have different standards in view to what is collectible.

Western people often accept even (slightly) damaged/repaired items, if its overall appearance is pleasurable to the eye (=decorative value). Chinese want perfectness, especially if it comes to 19th century and later items.

On the other hand, they sometimes accept even broken or repaired items with missing parts, if they

are very old and rare; those of an appearance that is usually considered only by museums and educational institutions.

### **Preferences of objects**

Western people like to use plates for decoration, either hung on walls or put on stands. To the Chinese these are frequently the least desirable item category. Jars, ewers and other utilitarian items connected to eating and drinking also rank in a prominent position.

These generally have higher collection value in Asia where they are part of daily life.

Chinese, on the other hand, prefer "standing" items like jars, ewers, or decorative items like vases, etc., and those used in the Chinese writing studio, related to writing with the brush, as well as those which originally had ceremonial functions. Censers and teapots are generally higher rated than in the west.

This is a bit surprising, really, as Chinese life is generally very food-centered. :-)

### **Collecting taboos**

It should always be the collector's decision what to collect, but an informed decision on what to buy should include knowledge of what something is.

This page provides information on items that some people may want to avoid. Unfortunately, they are sometimes offered under misleading names and descriptions, presumably because the seller does not know what they have.

### **Misrepresentations on the web**

In addition to the misnamed "ewer" mentioned in the above web page, there are other items you may want to pay attention to. For example. if you consider adding a porcelain cushion to your collection, better first post in the discussion forum. This is another item that is frequently misrepresented by western sellers. Most so-called porcelain cushions on sale are actually wrist rests used for feeling pulse by Chinese doctors. And they are mostly only vintage, and printed. Hand painted ones may be specifically made for sale to unsuspecting collectors.

### **Naming conventions - East and West**

#### *1 Handle - Ear*

Some 19th and early 20th century Chinese vases have small decorations attached to the right and left side of the vase neck. Many people call these handles, but they are not. They are just decorations. The Chinese call them "ears".

#### *2 Temple jar - General's jar*

Both in the west and China this type of jar is named after the shape of its lid. The western name comes probably from the shape of the eaves of a Chinese temple, while the Chinese version compares the shape to the head cover of a general of old.

### **Tripod censers**

Concerns censers with a round base plus feet that do not touch the ground:  
(The feet were added only for decoration)  
This type of tripod was made from the Ming dynasty and later.

### **Egg shell porcelain**

The thin body of this porcelain was made by shaving off the clay bit by bit after glazing, until it is very thin.

### **Censers of Song dynasty**

Censer shape is mostly straight up. From Yuan dynasty the wall started getting wider at the top than below.

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- *China Porcelain Making in Pictures*  
*I have found this series of old paintings to be an excellent overview over the manufacturing process in ancient China.*
- *Link to porcelain in the National Palace Museum, in Taipei:*  
<http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/Article.aspx?sNo=03000129>